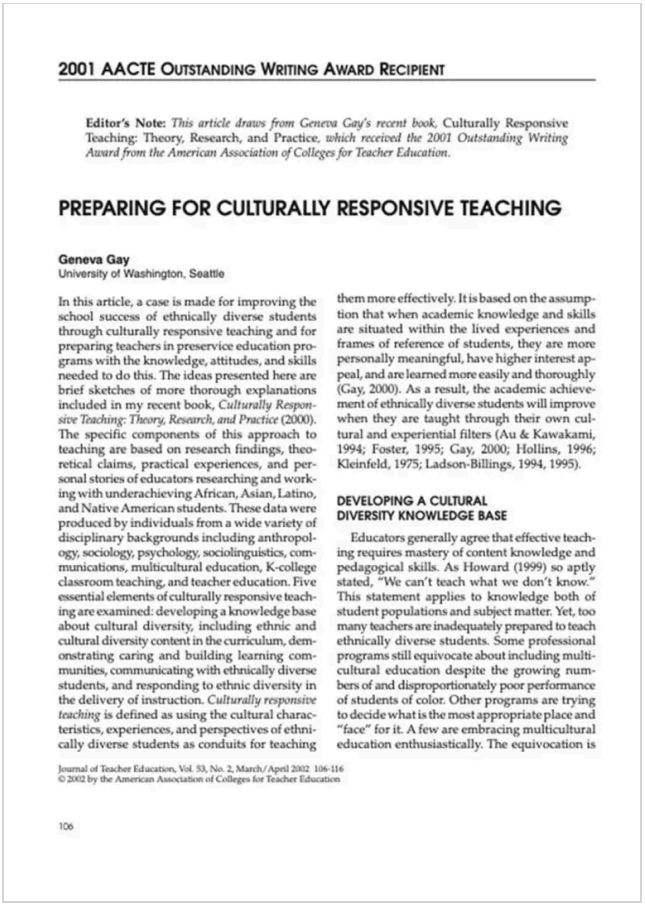


2001 AACTE Outstanding Writing Award Recipient

Editor's Note: *This article draws from Geneva Gay's recent book,* Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice, *which received the 2001 Outstanding Writing Award from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.*

PREPARING FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Geneva Gay
University of Washington, Seattle

In this article, a case is made for improving the school success of ethnically diverse students through culturally responsive teaching and for preparing teachers in preservice education programs with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to do this. The ideas presented here are brief sketches of more thorough explanations included in my recent book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2000). The specific components of this approach to teaching are based on research findings, theoretical claims, practical experiences, and personal stories of educators researching and working with underachieving African, Asian, Latino, and Native American students. These data were produced by individuals from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds including anthropology, sociology, psychology, sociolinguistics, communications, multicultural education, K-college classroom teaching, and teacher education. Five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching are examined: developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction. *Culturally responsive teaching* is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (Gay, 2000). As a result, the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000; Hollins, 1996; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

DEVELOPING A CULTURAL DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE BASE

Educators generally agree that effective teaching requires mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills. As Howard (1999) so aptly stated, "We can't teach what we don't know." This statement applies to knowledge both of student populations and subject matter. Yet, too many teachers are inadequately prepared to teach ethnically diverse students. Some professional programs still equivocate about including multicultural education despite the growing numbers of and disproportionately poor performance of students of color. Other programs are trying to decide what is the most appropriate place and "face" for it. A few are embracing multicultural education enthusiastically. The equivocation is

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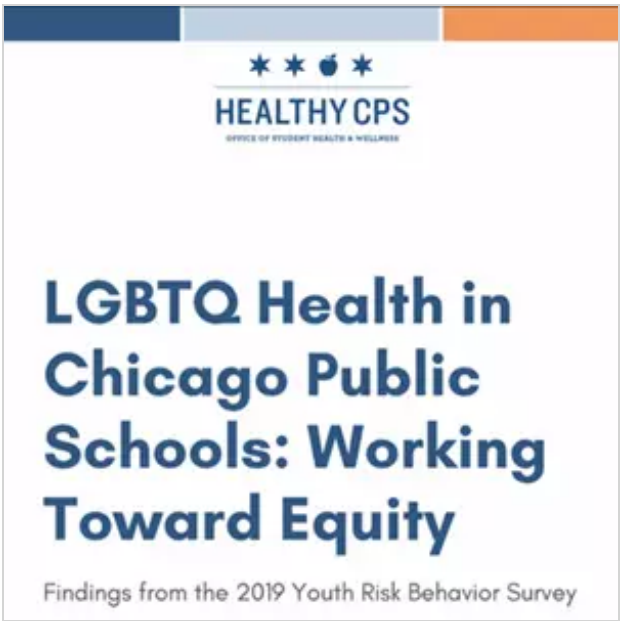
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